

# China cuts mobile fees as users binge on data

China's mobile service operators will eliminate charges for domestic roaming and long-distance calls as data services become their major source of revenue.

The fees will be canceled as of Oct. 1, said Vice Minister of Industry and Information Technology Chen Zhaoxiong at a news conference on Monday.

China began a campaign aimed at faster and more affordable Internet connections in 2015 after users had long complained about roaming fees, which were introduced 23 years ago.

The ministry has made solid progress toward the target with joint efforts by China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom, he said.

The official deadline is an ultimatum for the operators, which had unveiled plans to phase out the fees in August 2016, including no longer introducing service plans that charge those fees.

Their efforts witnessed stellar growth in China's 4G mobile service users from fewer than 100 million in 2014 to 770 million, more than half of the world's total.

Carriers are vying for these consumers, unveiling competitive data plans for them to browse through more content on handsets, no matter where they are.

On Feb. 24, China Unicom introduced a plan called "Ice Cream" with no monthly cap on call time and data at a price of 398 yuan (57.7 U.S. dollars), while its rivals rolled out schemes featuring high data quotas.

In 2016, some 9.36 billion gigabytes of data were consumed through mobile Internet use, up 123.7 percent year on year, as users consumed 98.3 percent more data on average monthly, official data showed.

The fee reduction would account for only a single-digit percentage of mobile carriers' revenues and can be counteracted through increased service consumption, said Fu Liang, a telecommunications analyst.

Xi Guohua, former chairman of China Mobile, also said a dent in profits will be outweighed by more consumption, employment and economic growth.

The fees-cutting decision was unveiled after a government work report delivered by Premier Li Keqiang Sunday had promised a raft of measures to ensure faster and more cost-effective information networks.

Among the measures are lower fees levied on small- and medium-sized enterprises for dedicated Internet access and broader access to broadband Internet in rural areas, Chen said.

China will continue to improve the market environment for telecommunications by further opening the market and promoting benign competition, he added.

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## Quality, efficiency should be growth focus: Li

The country's economic agenda should prioritize quality and efficiency to achieve this year's growth target, and also ensure improving public services such as education and healthcare, Premier Li Keqiang told lawmakers on Monday.

The Government Work Report set a target of around 6.5 percent, which is a medium high-speed growth in line with economic laws for the country's \$11 trillion economy, Li told deputies of the National People's Congress from the Shandong delegation during a panel discussion on Monday morning.

The economic growth will shore up employment, and the focus of this year's work should be on improving quality and efficiency by further reform and opening-up to strengthen intrinsic vitality, Li added.

Shandong reported GDP of 6.7 trillion yuan (\$972 billion) last year, or nearly 10 percent of China's GDP.

The premier said that ensuring medium high-speed economic growth must take supply-side structural reform as its central work while industrial transformation and economic upgrading are promoted.

The premier also called for continued administrative streamlining, lower institutional costs for enterprises and creating an inclusive and fair environment. Meanwhile, entrepreneurship and innovation should be encouraged to boost the transformation of traditional industries and cultivate new growth momentum, he said.

Li said economic achievements will be embodied in boosting employment, education, healthcare, social security, housing and environmental protection.

On Monday, another four members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee joined discussions of NPC deputies and members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said during discussions with deputies from Macao and Hong Kong that the country has made enormous progress—including new achievements while implementing the One Country, Two Systems policy since the 18th Party Congress in 2012.

At a meeting of sectors of the China Democratic League and public figures without party affiliation, Yu Zhengsheng, chairman of the National Committee of the CPPCC, said that General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping's speech on Sunday should be heeded regarding care and respect for intellectuals.

Wang Qishan, secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, called for protecting the sources of the Yangtze and Yellow rivers, while meeting with deputies from Qinghai province.

While talking to deputies from Tianjin, Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli called for steady economic development and social harmony to usher in the 19th Party Congress.

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## [This amendment presents a monumental opportunity to increase voter participation – Cat Smith](#)

**Cat**

**Smith MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement and Youth Affairs,** commenting on

Labour's victory in the House of Lords today, following Baroness Royall's amendment to the Higher Education and Research Bill, said:

"I am delighted that our colleagues in the Lords have defeated the Tories over their attempts to restrict student voter registration. Students are one of the most under-registered groups on the electoral roll and this amendment presents a monumental opportunity to increase voter participation whilst enabling councils to make significant savings on the canvassing process, saving our local authorities valuable time and resources.

"We now must ensure that the Tories accept this amendment when it moves to the Commons."

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# [Despite some cosmetic changes, this remains a retrograde step for the United States – Thornberry](#)

Labour's

Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Emily Thornberry

MP, responding

to the US administration's updated travel ban said:

"Despite

some cosmetic changes, this remains a retrograde step for the United States.

"By

abdicating its responsibilities under international law, the administration continues to send a terrible message to the rest of the world on the refugee crisis. While it remains to be seen whether or not this new executive order will stand up in court, nothing in today's announcement changes the fact that these measures are unnecessary, divisive and wrong."

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